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2. **PLAYLET . .**



"I Can't Afford It"

1 **By J. R. Peters, B. A.**



***With an Ontario Farm and Village
Setting Throughout***

***Humor, Romance and Common-
Sense in Happy Combination***

ADVANCE PRINT, WINGHAM

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FOREWORD

This little play, "I Can't Afford It" has an Ontario Farm and Village Setting, and is suggestive of many of the problems and necessities of country life. It was composed chiefly for use in country places, no elaborate stage equipment being necessary. The parsonage scenes require nothing more than the furniture of any average parlor, while the players are left entirely to their own wisdom as to how the street scenes may be set. This leaves room for the exercise of their own initiative in the matter.

The play has plenty of good healthy and clean humor, a pretty little romance, an averted tragedy, as well as many other homely touches of character. None of these however are overdone. Nevertheless in itself it is only a jumble of words. The players must make it live! The object of it is to develop the dramatic element in our rural young people, so that your success or failure with this or any other Play will depend upon You. Characterization is everything in the drama.

Suggestions along this line are given throughout the play but the greater part of it is left to the players themselves. First stick to the language of the manuscript, second, make the language your own, and third, learn to be free and easy in the presentation of it. The play has been given several times, and with great success. Here's hoping for yours,

JOHN R. PETERS, B. A.

. . . CASTE . . .

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Mark Farmer..... | A farmer |
| John Farmer..... | His son |
| Mrs. Farmer..... | His wife |
| Angelina Beaver..... | A girl about 14 |
| Rev. Thos. Whyte..... | Minister |
| Mrs. Whyte..... | His wife |
| Biddy McPhail..... | An Irish girl |
| Andrew Bonehead..... | A farmer |
| Mrs. Bonehead..... | His wife |
| Billy Bonehead..... | Their son |
| Jim Coulson..... | A farmer |
| Harry Coulson..... | His son who acts as Postman in Act II |
| Mirandy Coulson..... | His wife |
| Jim Hartley..... | College friend of minister |
| Eliza Catnup..... | An old maid with college education |

Time — 2½ hours.

I CAN'T AFFORD IT

ACT I

Personae—Mark Farmer; His son, John Farmer; Angelina Beaver.

Scene—Father and son hoeing in a field; father dressed in patched overalls, flannel shirt with neck open and sleeves rolled up; old felt hat, long top boots if available. Son in any light colored shirt, straw hat, buster trousers, old shoes with holes in toes, or otherwise delapidated. Father working some distance ahead of the boy. Father, hoeing leisurely, occassionally wiping the perspiration from his brow with red bandanna handkerchief.

Son—(after some time elapses) Say, Dad!

(Father does not answer at once.)

Son—Say, Da-ad!

Father—(turning around leisurely and spitting on his hands) What is it son?

Son—How many acres did you say yesterday we had in this farm?

F.—A hundred and sixty, more or less. Why what do you want to know for?

(Son does not answer at once; both go on hoeing silently for a few moments.)

S.—Well say Dad, how much did you say your wheat and corn would bring you this year?

F.—Oh, I dunno 'xactly, mebbe two thousand er so; why, what d' ye want to know for? (Son does not answer for a few moments.)

S.—(Leaning on his hoe) Well say Dad, didn't you say this farm would be worth about fifteen thousand dollars some day?

F.—Wo'th nigh onto that now son, I reckon. They ain't no better bit o' land in this county as I knows on. But then, never min' that now; get busy son, an' keep that hoe agoin' or ye won't own nothin' when yer as old as yer fa-ather.

S.—Well say Dad, if you own this farm and its worth fifteen thousand dollars and you'll get two more thousand for your wheat and corn, why couldn't we get an automobile, like Mr.——

F.—(fiercely) Hey? What's that you say? Get an automobile?

S.—Why yes, just like Mr.——

F.—(putting his hoe on the ground) Now that's enough. my son, ye kin stop right thar. I ain't agoin' t' get one o' them shootin' things to scare all the horses in the country, and make a fool o' my boy, see? And anyway I can't afford it.

S.—Well Mr. Beaver's have got one and it ain't made a fool o' their boy Dad. Clarence Beaver is alright, isn't he?

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F.—Don't know nothin' about the lad. Hope he's a lot decenter than his father anyhow, or else he ain't much. Hank Beaver hain't no more sense than the law allows, an' he don't need to worry about his money, for he ain't got any.

S.—Well I heard Hank Beaver say at the post office that he invested quite a lot of last years crop in his auto, and he considered it was a good thing to do.

F.—(flourishing his bandanna handkerchief) Like enough he did, son, like enough he did! Somethin' like the way old Hank would spend his money. He's everlastin' makin' investments like that. Why Hank give two hundred dollars to the building o' that church down thar, an' he tried to make me believe that he never missed the money. I ast him what he 'spected to do fer his ole' age, a-givin' money away that way, when he got nothin' fer it, and what d'ye suppose he said.

S.—I dunno, what did he say?

F.—(smiling sarcastically) He said he guessed if a fellar done his dooty by the Lord he wouldn't suffer in his ole age. Ha, ha, ha!

S.—Well our Sunday School teacher told us that too, and she says that that's what the Bible says.

F.—Hey? It do eh? Well mebbbbe it do sonny, but they ain't but mighty few people as believes it, lemme tell you.

S.—Well it looks like Hank believes it, for he paid it alright, and now he has his auto besides and ain't none the worse off.

F.—He hain't eh? Well I guess I know better nor that, son. Why they had to come an' borrow \$2000 from me to get the thing finished, at six per cent. interest. They wanted to have r'adin' rooms and parlor and kitchen and peany and I dunno what all. (sighing) Well, that may be alright to have such things, but it ain't my style.

S.—Well they paid it all back, didn't they?

F.—Oh yes, they did. And what's more, I used them right when they paid me. The interest came to forty dollars and fifteen cents, and bein' it was fer the church, I threw off the hull fifteen cents because I wanted to show 'em that I could be decent when I liked, too.

S.—Well anyway, if we had an auto like Beaver's, mother and Elizabeth could learn to drive it, like Mrs. Beaver and Angelina, and we could all go out for a drive in the evenings, after our hard day's work. Hank says it keeps them in good health, and he would rather pay out money for a car than for doctor's bills or hospital bills.

F.—Huh! Yer mother's too busy to be gaddin' around the country

after night. So's yer sister! If Hank Beaver's wife and gal can do it, that's Hank's business, see? But yer mother has had to work too hard for her money to spend it on a shootin' bus to gad about with, a-gettin' into trouble with her neighbors. And anyway, son, I can't afford it, so thar! (Goes on hoeing.)

S.—Well surely you can afford it as well as Beavers, Dad, they—

F.—(angrily) Now don't mention Beavers to me again John; they ain't no friends o' mine. Hank an' I don't speak, an' what's more I won't be seen speakin' to none of them. They're poor trash, I—

S.—(breaking in suddenly) Sh-h-h! There's some lady coming across the field! (Both turn in the direction of the visitor.)

S.—Why, hello there Angelina! Where are you bound for?

(Farmer turns around sharply and stares at her in amazement. Stands with his hands on his hips and noes through his arm.)

Angelina—Good morning, John. (Smiles at Farmer) Good morning Mr. F. (Farmer does not answer, but continues staring.)

A.—My, isn't it awful warm today. Really I'm nearly wilted. Mother and I have been sitting over there on the road in the car, and in the heat. You know I got a tack in my tire and I can't get it off myself to fix it, and I have been waiting for some man to come along to help me out with it. I wonder if you'd be so kind as to help me a few minutes, John.

John—Sure, Angelina, I'll be delighted to—(throws down his hoe and starts to walk off with her.)

Farmer—Eh? Wat's that you after, sissy?

A.—Why, my tire is punctured Mr. Farmer, and all I need is a little help to get it off so I can patch it.

F.—Ye do eh? Well, I'll just give ye to understan' that I don't keep no public garbage roun' here—

A.—You don't keep what, Mr. Farmer?

F.—(roars) I say I don't keep no public garbage —don't ye hear?

A.—You mean you don't keep a public garage, Mr. Farmer,—

F.—It's all the same to me sissy, whatever ye've a mind t' call it. John here has got all he kin do to hume, 'ithout wastin' his time a-foolin' 'roun' the road, a-tinkerin' wid auto mobyles fer other folks. (Turns away slowly and proceeds to hoe again.)

John—But it will only take a few minutes, father; I'll be back right away. (Winks at Angelina.)

F.—Minutes or no minutes, son, you jest pick up that 'ar hoe an' keep up with me here. Yer time's too precious to be foolin' roun' workin' for neighbors fer nothin'; I can't afford that. D'ye hear? Now get busy. (Goes on hoeing.)

J.—(picking up hoe slowly and again winks at Angelina) Where were you going, Angelina? (Talks lowly to her.)

A.—(lowly) Why mother and I were going out collecting subscriptions for our new community building. And we want to furnish the kitchen in the church, and build the new athletic building, with reading rooms and all that. Father said he was too busy to attend to it today, so we said we'd go in his place.

J.—New athletic buildin eh? Say, that will be dandy, won't it.

A.—I should say so. All kinds of games, inside and out, and a new swimming pool, John.

J.—Gee! That will be great! Say A. why not hit Dad up for something for that. I want to be in on that, I sure do.

A.—Why I intended to ask him, John. But I'm afraid to now, he seems to be awful cross about something. Couldn't you do it for me?

Farmer—High! Get that hoe a-goin' thar son; goin' to blather away the hull forenoon.

(John quickly starts to hoe, pretends to be working diligently, while waiting for F's. back to turn; then he quits and talks again to A.)

J.—(leaning on his hoe) You ask him A. Tell him I want it and I think he ought to give a hundred dollars. And say, I'll slip up to the house for a drink and while I'm there I'll slip around and pull your tire off. You go and talk to him and take up his attention so he won't miss me, see?

A.—(joyously) Oh John you're a hero. Go ahead and I'll do my best. John goes. Angelina goes up to Farmer and begins to flatter him.

A.—My this is a fine crop of roots you have here, Mr. Farmer.

F.—(staring at her suprised) Eh? What's that?

A.—I say this is a fine root crop you have, isn't it?

F.—Ho-oh! Yes, putty fair, considerin' the weather bein' so dry.

A.—It is rather dry, just now. But then father says that dry weather is best for the corn, so that will make up for it. "Everything carries its own recompense with it," Mr. Farmer. That's what Mr. Whyte, our minister said last Sunday. Do you know Mr. Whyte?

F.—Oh yes, I knows him a little. But what does he know about corn and dry weather?

A.—Oh well I don't mean to say he was talking about corn when he made that statement. He was talking about our disguised blessings, I believe. "All things work together for good," you know.

F.—(shortly) Spring was too wet for corn; it ain't doin' much.
(Begins to hoe.)

A.—Yes, it was a wet spring. But father says it didn't hinder the farmers much around here, as they nearly all had tile drains thro their farms. I suppose you have your farm drained; they say it pays wonderfully well.

F.—It's alright fer them as thinks that way sissy, but I can't afford it.

A.—(aside) Gracious me! What else can I talk about? (Peers off in the distance) I do wish John would hurry and get that tire off. Let me see. (ponders) Are those your cattle over there, Mr. Farmer?

F.—I believe so, missy, I believe so.

A.—What a lovely herd! You must make good money out of them now since butter and cheese are so high.

F.—It's hard work milkin' them ten cows, and a-feedin' on 'em, I want to tell you. A fellow has to be up with the sun in the morning and keep a-goin' all day, till nigh onto the middle o' the night, t' git anythin' done. Can't make money an' gad roun' the country, I want t' tell you.

A.—Oh no, but then that's the way all our great blessings come to us in this life, Mr. F., by just plain hard work, you know. And beside, we ought not to forget that the greatest good one can do in the world is not to make a lot of money. We have to have some pleasure to brighten up our toil as Mr. Whyte says. And by the way Mr. F. that just reminds me that you will be interested in what we are trying to do. You have a son and a fine daughter, Elizabeth; so now we are working hard to see if we cannot make the country life a little easier for them and much more attractive. You know we have very few advantages in the country for pleasure, or games or anything like that. So we want to finish our kitchen in the church and then put up a new athletic building, and community hall for the young people, where they can spend their evenings in reading, or swimming, or writing, or music and so on. It would be a great help to them after their hard day's work you know, or in the winter time, when they have a little more time on their hands. Wouldn't you like to help us Mr. Farmer?

F.—(staring wildly at her and holding up his hoe) What in thunder are ye givin' us now, sissy? Buildin' somethin' else new, eh? I suppose so! Never knew Hank Beaver yet when he warn't mixed up in buildin' somethin' er 'nother. I 'xpect yer father'll be buildin' hairy-planes next, er some other fool thing.

A.—Oh father isn't the only one who is doing all this. All the

neighbors are expecting to help with it, for they will all be benefitted, Mr. Whyte says—

F.—(breaking in suddenly) Hang me, what d'ye think I care what ye bloomin' preacher says? He ain't nothin' t' me, I want t' tell you. It's alright fer him t' talk, that's what he's paid fer! Let him git out an' show us how to grow better crops and make more money then he'll be doin' some good and earnin' hisn. Hang me, if I'm not sick listenin' t'all this stuff about benefittin' everybody. All h-he's a-doin' is is sittin' in his chair a-figurin' out how he can git a little more money out of the farmers, just like the rest o' them fellars as has nothin' else to do!

A.—Well he certainly has a tough job on his hands getting it out of some of them, Mr. Farmer. Father has been asking some men I know for money for the church for years now, and he can't get a cent out of them. He says it's like trying to draw blood out of a stone. But then I don't know but that Mr. Whyte is trying to do the very thing you say he ought to do. He is trying to help you be a better farmer, and grow better crops, and make more money, and give you more comforts.

F.—(fiercely) How's he goin' t' make my farm better, I'd like to know! What does he know about it anyway! Is he a-goin' to grow better crops by buildin' some fool sportin' house an' a pond hole fer the kids to waste their time in, an' all that?

A.—(quietly) Yes, sure.

F.—What fool talk! How's he goin' to do it?

A.—Well by making things a lot better and healthier for the boys and girls on the farm, and making things more attractive for the young men and women, so that they will not need to go to the city to find all their pleasures. Then they will stay at home on the farms and help their fathers and mothers with the heavy work, see?

F.—(cooling down and shaking his head in disgust) Well, well, well! Have I ever come to this! Such fool talk I never heard! Well, sissy, I haven't any more time to waste on you today, so—

A.—But John thought this was a fine idea. He was very much taken with it, and he thought sure you would give us a hundred dollars at the very least—

F.—(loudly) John be hanged with his hundred dollars! I wonder who's boss o' my money—

A.—But surely you will give us something, for the sake of your son and daughter, Mr. Farmer, they surely deserve—

F.—(louder still) Sis, I won't give ye nuthin', d'ye hear? I can't afford such fool trash! (Slams hoe on ground.)

CURTAIN

ACT II—SCENE I

Personae—Rev. Thos. Whyte; Mrs. Whyte; Biddy McFail, the Irish girl; Jim Hartley.

Scene—A minister's home. The minister and his wife, Rev. Thos. Whyte, Mrs. Whyte. Minister sitting in his study, opens a book and begins to read.

Postman—(enters and hands him some letters) Good morning, Sir!

Minister—Good morning. (musing) Well I wonder what's new this morning. (sorts over the letters) There is the usual flood of advertisements I see. Invitations to buy a lot of new clothes, too, I notice. Things I cannot afford. Here's one from our new clothing house in town. (reads) "Just arrived! A full new line of Men's furnishings, of the very latest styles and most popular prices. Greatest bargains ever offered in the town. Here are a few of our growing stock of men's necessities, caps, hats, collars, cuffs, neckties, shirts, braces, underwear, trousers, vests, coats, overcoats, mackintoshes, spring suits and overcoats, shoes, socks, rubbers, garters, laces, collar buttons, cuff buttons, studs, cuff links, etc., etc., etc. I suppose that et-cetra means a host of other articles too numerous to mention. Gracious me, it is surprising what a multitude of articles it takes to dress a fellow these days. One would wonder where they stick them all onto a man, anyway. Then, this isn't saying anything about the money one needs to cope with this cost of high living. (throwing the paper on desk) Well, Baker and Co., I'm afraid your advertisement is lost so far as I am concerned. I haven't any way of cornering the market on my goods, so that there is no possibility of me ever being a millionaire. For while everything else is gone up in price talk is just as cheap as in the days when Adam sang love ditties to Eve. (wife enters from behind him, he does not notice her) Talk! Talk! Talk! All kinds of talk, poetic, dramatic, prosaic, prophetic, philosophic, legal and just ordinary chit-chat! It's a mighty poor commodity on the market these days. Poor in more ways than one; firstly it doesn't pay very great dividends; secondly, people can take larger doses of talk without affecting them than anything else in the world; thirdly, it's chiefly a woman's commodity rather than a man's, for who can resist the super-eloquence of a woman, when she gets in earnest? As for man—well, he has to say a certain amount anyway; he'd die if he couldn't, so they let him talk to keep him alive and enjoy his company. But when a woman begins to talk, the whole

world listens, and the newspapers marvel upon her cleverness——

Mrs. W.—(breaking in) Thanks awfully, hubby! That's quite a compliment you are paying to your wife's sex. Really now, you can be honest about the women folks when you like, especially if you think there aren't any around and you are not committing yourself.

Mr. W.—Oh, hello, Margaret, I'm just reading my correspondence!

Mrs. W.—Correspondence! That's queer correspondence. Why who ever had occasion to write such stuff as that to you? I think I'll have to investigate this.

Mr. W.—(passing the advertisement over to her) Great bargains on in new hats down street, wife.

Mrs. W.—Oh, I see; then I suppose that is the woman's commodity you were talking about, was it?

Mr. W.—Partly; but I have made up my mind to do something else. I have decided to leave this preaching business to you, Margaret. You're a lot better talker than I am and I'm convinced that talking is more in a woman's line anyway. Then I'll go at something else in which I can keep my mouth shut and earn more money. Surely between the two of us we can earn enough for our old age.

Wife—Ha, Ha, Ha, Tom good for you. Say Hubby, you are a genuine woman's hero. I'm sure the Housewife's League will be decorating you with an Iron Cross or a leather medal, for giving your wife such a preference. But that's just a man over again! If a farmer can't make his hens lay as well as pay, he gives them over to his wife. Like Deacon Bailey; did you hear what he did?

Mr. W.—No, what's the Deacon been doing now?

Margaret—Well the Deacon had a little pig that he thought was going to die, he makes his wife a present of it,—“to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health”, but especially in sickness. Poor Mrs. Bailey, like a lot of other women, was glad to get a chance to get a little pocket money, so she got that pig into a place by itsself, sat up nights with it, fed it, tended it, kept it clean and comfortable for eight long months and then when it was all sleek and fat and round and ready to put on the market, didn't pork take a raise to \$20 a hundred and what do you think old Bailey did? He went and sold his wife's pig to pay his threshing bill, and she never saw a cent of the money.

Minister—(earnestly) Is that so? Say Margaret which was the biggest hog, the one that was sold, or the one that was doing the selling?

Wife—(emphatically) I don't know, but I have my own opinion of a man who hands a thing over to his wife because he can't make it pay. (Struts around the room.)

Minister—Ha, Ha. Say, Margaret, you should add, "Thou art the man." I am just wondering what you would do with a husband like that?

Wife—(sighs) Do? Really I don't hardly know, Tom. I think I'd drive that man down to the weigh-scales and sell him with the rest of his kind. That's about the only way to treat such a man. Get rid of him at so much a pound.

Minister—Ha, Ha. I'm afraid you wouldn't get rid of him even then. Margaret.

Wife—Why not?

Minister—Why you'd only be buying him back next day in your bologna sausage.

Wife—(laughing) Yes, I suppose, but you'd have the satisfaction of giving him a good roasting anyway. But say Tom, isn't he the fellow who wouldn't give anything for your new community building?

Minister—He's the chap, I guess, or one of them. There were others of course. Mark Farmer refused to give anything, even though his boy wanted to be in on it. That son of his is a bright chap, too. He is a boy of good parts and given half a chance he would make something of himself. But the old man says he can't afford it.

Wife—Can't afford it. Dear me, who ever invented that term?

Minister—Likely some relation of Bailey's.

Wife—(looking over her shoulder at him) Yes, likely, or some minister who tried to get his wife to preach for him when he couldn't make it pay.

Minister—(after a pause) Say, Margaret, I think your father must have been a tool grinder; you're so wonderfully sharp.

Wife—No sir, my father was an expert on electricity and was as full of his subject as some preachers I know. Dad used to say I was very much like him.

Minister—In what way, pray.

Wife—(deliberately) In the first place I was all of magnetism, and in the next place I was easy to "spark." Didn't you think so, too?

Minister—Well I admit you were quite a shock to me, Margaret, but look here would you, a lettergram!

Wife—What about, pray.

Minister—(opening it reads) Dayton, Ohio, June 22nd. Coming to stay for the summer. If agreeable I would like to live with you.

Otherwise would be glad to be recommended to first-class hotel or boarding house. Expect to arrive to-morrow 10.30. Jim. What do you think of that, Wife? It's Jim Hartley, my college chum, you've heard me speak of him.

Wife—Yes, Tom, but what in the world is bringing him to this little burg for the summer? Dear me, he must be looney, or dyspeptic or some other horrid thing.

Minister—He is no doubt looking for a quiet place to rest and get fresh air. Do you think you can keep him, Margaret? I have no doubt he will be willing to pay well for his board for Jim is well fixed and I say, Margaret, you can have all you make out of him for spending money. He'll be your invalid "pig" so to speak.

Wife—Bless you, Honey, what do I want with such and invalid. I don't know but what I'd rather have a real pig. He wouldn't be so particular and he would have to take what I gave him without grumbling.

Minister—Oh, well, I don't anticipate any trouble from that score, Margaret, Jim is a good chap. He has been boarding at big hotels and high-toned eating houses for about four years and I guess all he needs is a little change of air and surroundings, and I know you will be equal to the board problem. Anyway he says here "if agreeable" he would like to stay.

Wife—Well, Tom, you send him word at once that we will be glad to have him if he is "agreeable" when he is here. (aside) Bless me coming tomorrow at 10.30. Here it's near dinner time already. I shall have to get things in shape for "his lordship"; I haven't a thing ready yet.

CURTAIN

ACT II—SCENE II. Next day.

Minister—(musing in study straightening up his desk) The train is in and I suppose Hartley will be here in a few minutes. I hope he makes himself agreeable company. I would be sorry to inflict him upon Margaret if he is sickly and a kind of a grouch about what he eats or drinks. He used to be a fine healthy chap though, with an elephant's appetite. The old boarding Missus in Toronto felt all the time that Jim was a losing proposition. He ate so much more than we puny, delicate chaps. But she couldn't resist his good nature. He was always bringing her milk chocolates and candy. My gracious, I haven't touched a sermon for Sunday yet, and I have that meeting to attend tonight at the

school. (door bell rings) That's Jim I suppose. (goes to door, pulls open but is very much surprised) Why, Good morning, Miss-ah-

Lady—Good marnin' Sor. If ye'd be so kind sor, I have a little book here I'm shure you'd be plased to see through. I'm not axin' ye ta buy, Sor, unless ye plase, but if ye'd be so kind as to jest give it a good recommend, it would greatly assist me to sell the book, and with you're kind lave I'll come in and let ye examine it, Sor. (Lady enters dressed in some characteristic style.)

Minister,—Certainly Madam, come inside. Just be seated. What is the title of the book?

Lady—It's a "History of the Great War" if ye plase. (Handing it to him) It's a very illigent book, by the besht authors, and the latest photographs from the actual scanes of battle. (Minister looks through carefully.)

Minister—How long have you been selling the book?

Lady—(smiling) Only since yisterday, if ye plase, sor. I came to Toronto two days ago, and not knowing just what to do, I saw this advertisement in the paper and sure I thought I would try it as a means of earnin' a little money and seein' the counthry.

Minister—(after some examination) Well it looks good to me, and I think you ought to do well with it; by the way, you say you came to Toronto only a few days ago. Where did you come from, may I ask?

Lady—From Belfast, if ye plase Sor, just landed at Halifax ten days ago.

Minister—And do you expect to stay in this country?

Lady—(smiling) I may have to sthay, Sor, and die here, unless I have betther luck than I have been having. Law Sakes, but the people here are as stingy as old Pat Shaney at home. He was so stingy he died wid starvation—living was too expensive.

Minister—And won't the farmers aroun' buy your book?

Lady—Bless ye, dear sowl, they say th. cant afford books. Why in Oireland we'd niver think o' sayin' that any more than we'd say we couldn't afford to drink pure wather. (Enter Mrs. Whyte.)

Minister—Margaret, this is a young lady from Belfast, Ireland. Pardon me, I don't think I know your name, Miss-ah-

Lady—Me name's Biddy McFail, if ye plase, Madam, and I'm real plased to make your acquaintance. Ye'r good husband has just done me the first favor I've received since I landed in this country and I'm shure I'm much obliged to yez both. (rises to go. Door bell rings.)

Minister—That's Jim likely. (Goes to door) Just be seated a minute

Miss McFail. (Biddy sits down.)

Minister—(at the door) Good boy, Jim. Come in. You're as welcome as the flowers in May.

Jim—Thanks, Tom. I feel like a May flower too, altho I'm nearly wilted with the heat. However, water is good for flowers, so you can put me into the bath tub as soon as you please.

Minister—Come in and cool off, Jim. This is my good wife and your new mistress. She's a bit hard to get on with, Jim, but she's good natured to nice looking men.

Jim—(bowing and shaking hands) I'm happy to meet you Mrs. Whyte and I quite appreciate the risk you took when you agreed to be housekeeper for this chap. (pointing to Tom.) But I understand something of a woman's pluck, but—(stops short on getting a look at Biddy.)

Minister—This is a lady friend from Ireland, Jim. Just dropped in this morning. Miss McFail—Mr. Hartley.

Biddy—(courtesying) Pleased to make ye, sor.

Jim—(deliberately) How do-o-o, Miss McFail. (Is struck by her fine appearance and they both exchange glances and appear very much embarrassed.)

Biddy—If ye please, Sor, I'll be goin' now. Many thanks for your kindness, Sor, and——

Mrs. W.—Well say, have you any engagement for dinner Miss McFail.

Biddy—No, Madam, I haven't, but I wouldn't care to intrude upon yer company now (takes another glance at Jim and he at her) and I think I better be going on about my business.

Mrs. W.—Not at all. You are welcome to stay for dinner, and by the way if you haven't any other task I'd be glad of your help for a few days in my sewing and housework. I am alone and will pay you what you think is right and give you a chance to look around for another position, if you wish. Make your home with us while you do your canvassing.

Jim— That's talking business now, Mrs. White. Tom, you'd never have thought of that. (Slapping him on the back.)

Biddy—Oh, dear bless ye, it's pleased indeed I'd be to earn a little money in any way for I'm not very well off and 3000 miles from home and among strangers, (breaks down and cries) if ye only give me something to do I'd work for me board until I can get some other position.

Mrs. Whyte—That's alright, don't cry, dear. Take off your things and sit down and rest a while, dinner will be ready in a few minutes. (Sits on sofa in study.)

Minister—Be seated, Jim old chap, and lets hear all about the folks.

(Jim incidentally sits down on sofa beside Biddy—Biddy moves over bashfully.)

CURTAIN

ACT II—SCENE III. Next day.

Scene—Jim and Tom in Minister's study. Jim is pacing up and down and musing, incidentally asking Tom questions.

Jim—I'm very much interested in this new scheme you're trying to put across here, Tom. It certainly bespeaks new things for your part of the country. That community building is a great idea.

Tom—Yes, it's a good scheme alright. Here are the plans for everything, school, play grounds, swimming pool, agricultural building, together with the church, parsonage and teacher's homes across the way.

Jim—Great. Why I should think that a mighty good business proposition. The farm property would go up about sixty per cent. with an institution like that around here. When do you hope to begin the construction work?

Tom—At the rate we are going, about one year after Doomsday, Jim.

Jim—Why, what's the matter?

Tom—The very thing we need most we haven't got.

Jim—What's that? The site?

Tom—No, sir, the money.

Jim—Well isn't the country worth it?

Tom—Oh, yes. They are worth fifty times as much as we need. We already have ten thousand dollars suscribed by the merchants in town here, on condition that we can raise twenty thousand more. But there's the rub. The farmers evidently don't see either the need or the good of the thing. In fact I have kind of given it up as a bad job. They say they can't afford it even when the Government offers to pay sixty per cent. of the first cost. And when a man says he can't afford anything you can usually put it down that your efforts along that line are about useless. They claim their taxes are too high now, and of course this would boost them up a little more, so they reckon it's too expensive.

Jim—But don't they acknowledge it would be a good thing for the country?

Tom—Oh, yes they all acknowledge that, but then, they have the money and I have not, so that's all there is to it.

Jim—You worked this all out yourself?

Tom—Yes, that's my idea of a good healthy community centre. (Jim

is silent a few minutes, then paces across the room again.)

Jim—Say Tom, this little girl your wife took in is quite a sensible little woman, isn't she?

Tom—She certainly is, Jim, and I advise you to warm up to her. Margaret says she is a dandy housekeeper, clean and tidy, and a first class cook. That's just what you need Jim, a good cook.

Jim—Right you are. But a fellow needs to know a little about a girl's record before he ventures on any such schemes as you suggest.

Tom—Well she has a recommendation from a very fine home Jim, with a rider attached to it saying that she is at liberty to return to that home at any time. The name is that of the Earl of Devon. So apparently Biddy has been well connected and a girl of very high social order. At any rate you can tell that by her manner and conversation. (Enter Biddy with book case.)

Jim—Well, Miss McFail, what kind of luck did you have this morning.

Biddy—Very poor, Mishter Hartley, I'm afraid; but if you please Mr. Hartley, jist call me plain "Biddy." It feels more homelike and this is the first homelike place I've been since I left Belfast.

Jim—Alright the, Biddy; and since we are nicely acquainted now supposing you call me Jim.

Biddy—Oh, bless ye, no. That wouldn't be dacent in a gentleman's house. No, no, Mr. Hartley, I'm only a plain cuntry girl, and my poor mother taught me to know my place and keep it.

Jim—Ah, but you're in Canada now, Biddy.

Biddy—True, Mr. Hartley, but I must be a lady even if I were at the north pole or in the middle of Africa. Shure I wouldn't dishonor my father's good name for the work'd by being so discourteous.

Jim—Well, I admire your courage and good breeding, Miss McFail, and I'm sure——

Biddy—(raising finger) Pardon me, Mr. Hartley, "Biddy."

Jim—I stand corrected, Biddy. But then I think we can compromise on this question a little. You can call me Mr. Jim. So you had rather poor success today, Biddy.

Biddy—Yes, very poor——Mr.——Jim——(hesitatingly.)

Jim—Where did you go on your canvass?

Biddy—Out into the country among the farmers, and among the town people.

Jim—And they wouldn't give you an order?

Biddy—Oh, yes, I got two orders from the farmers, one from Mr. Beaver and I forget the other man's name.

Jim—I wonder if I could do better than that.

Biddy—You might, I'd be glad to have you try it anyway, if you will.
Jim—I'm half inclined to try it Biddy. What will you guarantee me as a start on this job?

Biddy—A lot of hard looks and cross answers, that's all

Jim—(smiling) That's not saying much for your job, Biddy.

Biddy—I'm done with it Mr. Jim. It's aisy to see I was never intended to sell books for a living. (Throws down the case.)

Jim—No. You will have to first convince the folks that they need your book then sell it. But we can surely get you something better to do, something more befitting your good sense and good standing, Biddy. I'll take the agency for these books off your hands.

Tom—You two are making a bargain now, remember. Be sure it doesn't get deeper than merely selling books, and besides I'm listening to all this chat, and won't allow any bad bargains in my house, see.

Jim—Well Biddy's book here is a bargain too. I notice it is quite an interesting bit of work (aside) just like Biddy, (aloud) and I like her, or it. Pardon me that was a slip.

Tom—No apologies are needed for the truth, Jim, old boy.

Biddy—(rising shyly) I think I'll go now and help Mrs. Whyte get the dinner, if you'll excuse me. Mr. Jim and Mr. Whyte. (Rises and goes out.)

Jim—Certainly Biddy.

Tom—Jim I'm going down to the post office before dinner. I'll be back in ten minutes. You can enjoy Biddy's history while I'm gone.

Jim—Very good, Tom. (Alone, musing.) Well those folks are great souls! Seems to me they are always thinking about how they can improve matters for other people. Tom is the same good-hearted sport he was at college and his wife is a good double. Think of the way they took that little Irish girl into their home that day. And isn't she a gem of the ocean, too? Thunder and lightning! I never saw such a pair of sparkling blue eyes in all my life. She certainly is a real Irish beauty, the kind one reads about in books and magazines and imagines it's fiction. Well, Sir, if I ever get out of here without getting bewitched by Biddy's charms, I deserve to dry up and be cremated alive. I can't understand why she was ever dropped down into my presence unless it was to save me from being a crusty old bachelor. Gee Whiz! Then look at these plans he has. (Looks over plans.) Any man who would do that for a neighborhood deserves the best they can give him. Imagine our firm doing a thing like that for its

men. (Scratches his head.) Can't put it across, eh. Not money enough. I wonder if I can put something over this bunch of people to help this preacher out. He needs it, poor chap, and so do they. (After a few minutes thought.) I think I've got an idea. It may land me in jail, but it will be worth it for the fun I get out of it. Gee, here goes! (Slaps his knee. Voice from inside.) Come to dinner, please.

CURTAIN

ACT II—SCENE IV. Scene without words.

Scene—The stage is set to represent the parlor of the Parsonage with a large settee in the centre. The best effect is gained here by using the "spot-light" thrown by any good magic lantern, by removing the projection lens and focussing the vari-colored rays upon the settee. Biddy enters quietly from one side, dressed appropriately, with some story book in her hand and seats herself leisurely on the settee. Jim also enters, attired in light summer suiting and sits down quietly beside her. Behind the scenes a quartette or any number of singers, sings softly, with or without music, the refrain only, of "Love's Old Sweet Song," during which Jim moves up closer to Biddy putting his arm quietly about her waist which Biddy shyly allows him to do. As the quartette sings the last line of the refrain, "Comes Love's Old Sweet Song," Jim takes a diamond ring from his pocket and slips it gently onto Biddy's finger, allowing it to sparkle in the spot-light, by holding it gently to it's rays. In this posture the curtain is drawn slowly and lights turned on.

If the lantern is not available, this scene may be enacted in the glare of the footlights, but the author would strongly advise the spot-light effect, if at all possible.

LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG. (Refrain.)

Just a song at twilight,
When the lights are low,
And the glimmering shadows,
Softly come and go,

This old song may be purchased at any music store for a small amount.

ACT III—SCENE I

Scene—A village street. Two farmers meet and are talking, later joined by several more—Mark Farmer and Jim Coulson talking.
M. Farmer—it's a mighty fine day, Jim.

Jim C.—It is that, Mark. How's your hoe-crow comin' on?

Mark F.—Not bad. How's yourn?

Jim C.—Fairish. My corn is sufferin' tho.

Mark F.—How's that?

Jim C.—Too much hot weather, I guess. Seems to shrivel it up fearfully.

Mark F.—Hm! That's funny! Mine's doin' fine. Never saw it look better. (Enter Andrew Bonehead.)

Andrew—Good-day, men. Nice day.

Both—Yes, fine day, Andy.

Jim C.—How's that spring colt gettin' on? Did it get better?

Andrew—Nope, I lost it.

Jim C.—Too bad, Andy. Horses is horses now, too. Quite a loss.

Andy—Yes, but then, oh I don't mind very much. I'm thinkin' of quittin' the farm anyway.

Jim C. and Mark F.—Quittin' the farm? How's that?

Andy—Oh I can't do much more and help is scarce and anyway I've just made an investment that will fix me all right in a year or two and I won't need to farm lemme tell yer.

Mark F.—Made an investment? Where?

Andy—In a gold mine somewhere in South America. Why the feller that owns it is over here at the hotel now. It's the surest thing under the sun, men. He has samples thar of the gold dust, that shows as plain as day that it's goin' to be worth half a million in a few weeks. And I guess the feller's alright, too, he's stayin' at the preachers down there, he's a friend of his.

Mark F.—He is, eh? Huh? Say, Andy, can't we get in on that?

Andy—Why-er-yes-I guess yer can. Here's the feller comin' now. I'll fetch him over and introduce you if you like. (turns around.)

Hi, there Mister! Come here a minute. (beckoning.)

(Hartley enters—Andrew Bonehead introduces him.)

Andy—These are two friends o' mine, Mr. Hartley. Mr. Farmer and Mr. Coulson. (they shake hands.) I was just a-tellin' them about yer proposition but now as yer here yerself you can tell them all about it.

Jim Hartley—Yes, men, I think I have something to help you. This little business that I represent is still in a dormant state. All it needs is some money to make it one of the best paying propositions in the world. I haven't got enough to make it go myself nor has the Company. The Company are guaranteed \$20,000 already, providing they can raise another \$20,000.

Mark F.—And what profits do ye guarantee?

Hartley—At present time we are guaranteeing 30 per cent. at the end

of the first year, 60 per cent at the end of five years and we fully expect that at some time it will yield 100 per cent. or more.
Jim C.—Thirty per cent. the first year, eh? Gee whiz! That looks good to me.

Andy—That's alright for me, men, I tell ye. I see the end of my sluggin' around the old pig-pen and the old stables and grubbin' out a livin' on the farm any more. I'm goin' to make my money easier, you betcha.,

Mark F.—Well that 'ar sounds good to me too. Where is this dum business did you say Mister.

Hartley—In Nevada, men. It's a gold mine near a small town about the size of this. That's not so far away you know.

Jim C.—Wal, I ain't invested no money in my life except on the farm but gee whiz, look how a feller's got to work night and day fer his money on the farm. He's up in the marning at 4 o'clock and goin' all day till late at night. I believe in investin' in somethin' else. Gee whiz, there's my brother-in-law's cousin what used to live in a bit of a shack on Sprawl street. Now he's livin' in a big house on Humbug Avenue. Gee whiz, he never worked hard for his money. He made it all in investin' in gold mines and stock yards er somethin' like that he told me. So I think I'll put ye in a few thousand, Mister, if ye don't mind—\$3,000 anyway and maybe more later.

Hartley—Very well, sir, you can make out your cheque to me or to the order of the company; the Manhood Development Scheme, Sierra, Nevada.

Mark F.—I guess I' m good fer another \$5,000 Mister. Did yec say yer was stayin' at the preachers?

Hartley—Yes, I'm an old friend of his, and am spending a few weeks here for my health.

Mark F.—He's a fine feller that preacher. He's doin' somethin' fer his country now, I consider. I hope ye will come to visit him again sometime.

Jim C.—Say I've got a few friends in town today. If you stay here I'll bring them around too.

Hartley—Alright, Mr. Coulson, I'll be here at the hotel until five o'clock tonight. Then Mr. Whyte takes us out for a drive every evening, so I'll not be home.

Jim C.—We'll be there at four this afternoon. Good-day, men. I must go along and hunt the other fellers up.

Hartley—Just come over to the hotel first, men, and you can make out your cheques there. I have a room there with everything handy.

All—Certainly——come along——

Andy B.—Nuthin' like tryin' a thing anyway, men. "Never venture, never win," that's my opinion. (They all leave the stage.)

CURTAIN

During the interval someone announces that between this scene and and the next a space of several months have passed.

ACT III—SCENE II.

Several months later. Enter Jim Coulson and Mark Farmer from opposite sides and address each other.

Jim C.—Good mornin' Mark. How are you feeling today?

Mark F.—Oh fine, Jim, fine. I ain't felt better fer years than I be right now. My wife, though, ain't very well.

Jim C.—Oh, that's so? What is the matter with her? Got the influenzie, Mark?

Mark F.—No, don't think so. She's been workin' pretty hard you know. We have a lot of cows and she has to help milk and make the butter and take it to the market. Besides she had all her own work to do in the house, so I think she is a bit run down but she will get over it I guess.

Jim C.—Had the doctor in to see her, Mark?

Mark F.—No, it wasn't worth while bringing in a doctor fer all she had; just a bit of a cold, I guess.

Jim C.—Isn't Elizabeth home now? She ought to be able to help a little.

Mark F.—No, she ain't home. She said she didn't like it on the farm and wanted to go to the city to work in the store. She said there were too long hours on the farm and she didn't like it. The girls in the city have only to work from eight o'clock to five, and they have the hull evenin' to go out to the theayters or the picture shows or anywhere else they has a mind to.

Jim C.—Yes, but gee whiz, that soon spends the money, Mark. She can't go to the theayters fer nothin' lemme tell ye.

Mark F.—No, but then she don't pay fer it. If she did I would soon raise a holler, you bet your best hat on that Jim. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Jim C.—Then who does pay fer it?

Mark F.—Why, don't you know? Well I'm s'prised at you. 'Lizabeth is quite a handsome lass don't you know and sure there is always a couple of dudes hanging round that's anxious to spend their money, and she might as well have the benefit of it as anyone else. Yes sir, 'Lizabeth's a very handsome lass I want to

tell you. She's a pretty good looker. Yes sir!

Jim C.—I suppose John is with you yet.

Mark F.—Yes he is, but he wants to go to school agin and his mother wants it too, but I can't spare him now. I can't afford it either. It costs a heap of money fer eddication these days and I fer one can't see the good of so much of it. I didn't need no eddication to get along and see how I have got along. I didn't have a dollar to start with and I don't see why everybody else can't do the same as me. This going to college and getting high-falutin' is all a bloomin humbug. (Looking round discovers a lady approaching.) Why who's this a-comin'?

Jim C.—(quietly) It's 'Liza Catnup I guess; going to the store, likely. Let's josh her a bit Mark, jist fer fun. (Eliza enters from side dressed in sunbonnet and some characteristic dress, carrying a market basket on her arm.) Good day 'Liza. (Feigning surprise.) Sure I hardly knowed ye, ye're so spicked up.

Mark F.—How do, 'Liza; is yer hens a-layin' these days, 'Liza? Gracious me, you have a big enough basket, anyway. Why don't you get a man to help you carry that big basket?

Eliza—Why don't I huh! Because this 'set is too much like a man now, Mark Farmer.

Jim C.—Too much like a man? How's that 'Liza? Gettin' grey with age I guess. Ha! Ha!

Eliza—No but because there is nothing in it. That's my opinion of most men I ever knew. (Enters Andrew Bonehead.)

All—Good day, Andy, how's business today?

Andy—Great. Just got word of a new find down yonder at the mines; they are going ahead fine. We're alright, men; I have rented my farm and am going down now to get out my sale bills. No more sluggin' fer mine!

Eliza—Why what's this you're talking about now?

Andy—Why didn't you hear, 'Liza? I thought you'd put some money into it.

Eliza—Money into what, pray?

Andy—Why into that gold mine down in Nevada. It's a sure thing 'Liza; you ought to invest a few hundred and get a little comfort for your old age.

Mark F.—There's thirty or forty per cent in it 'Liza.

Jim C.—And we're all in on it 'Liza—most all the farmers are taking stock for a thousand or more. Let's see what's the name of it now? The Manhood Development Mine, down at Manhood, Nevada, that's the name. Oh it's a sure thing 'Liza and the agent what's here, he's a real gentleman, stayin' at the preacher's house.

Why he paid for all our dinners the other day at the hotel here and it cost him pretty nearly seventy-five cents.

Eliza—Well I declare I never saw men any better. You fellows certainly have more money than brains. What did you say was the name of it?

Andy—The Manhood Development Scheme, of Manhood, Nevada. Manhood, you see, is the name of the place nearest to the mine.

Eliza—It is eh? Well it is a great pity you fellows can't see some manhood at home to develop. Why don't you put your money into something that will be doing this place some good instead of developing some unheard of place the other side of the globe. We need a new school here for instance and——

Mark F.—Aw to hang wid the new school; the old un is plenty good enough for this place. I don't see what they want with all this new stuff in school now-a-days, anyway. When we went to school there warn't nuthin but readin', writin', and 'rithmetic and we got along with it. I don't see what they want any more fer. These people make me mad. Why don't they——

Jim C.—That's what I say Mark. Instead of teaching the kids how to make money now-a-days, they're a-teachin' on em how to spend it, by gum!

Andy—It's a fact, men! My kids need more books in one year than I did in my hull life time. Why my school taxes last year was \$5.63 on a hundred acres. It's robbery I say, it's robbery!

Eliza—Well you are a bright bunch of men I must say. (Pretends to go.) I don't think I will stop to talk to you. (Halts) Say Mark Farmer isn't your wife sick? I heard she was.

Mark F.—Yes she is a bit off color; rheumatism I guess.

Eliza—That's living with a man that thinks what was good enough for his grandmother is good enough for his wife. I saw your wife the other day pulling water up out of the well with a rope and big bucket and down on her knees scrubbing that old pine floor in the kitchen where there are knots half an inch high. I tell you I couldn't help thinking of the change in that woman in about 15 years. She used to be the finest looking girl in these parts, but now she's just an old woman nearly bent double. It's a wonder you couldn't invest some money around home instead of giving it to some wild-cat scheme 3000 miles away. What's 'Lizabeth doing now.

Mark F.—'Lizabeth? Why she's makin' more money than her father, 'Liza. She's a secretary in an office in the city.

Eliza—She might better be at home helping her mother and being secretary for her father. One of these days you'll pay the under-

taker all 'Lizabeth earns and a sight more than she'll ever save, to put her poor mother's bones under the sod. But that's just the way with some men. They'd rather pay funeral expenses any day than household expenses. That's just the way! Wear out the old wife making money for the new one to spend.

Jim C.—But then you can't blame the girl for wantin' to earn a little money, 'Liza; my girls want to do the same. They want fine dresses and swell clothes and a pianny and I don't know what all. Let 'em earn 'em, that's what I say, let 'em earn 'em.

Eliza—Have they got to go away from home to earn money, Jim Coulson? Is that the way you bring up your children? You men ought to be ashamed of yourselves. If you'd have let your boys and girls earn a little of that four or five thousand dollars you took out of their hides and put into that cursed gold mine, they'd have stayed at home with you and been the cheapest and most willing help you'll ever have. Your wife looks like a graveyard ghost too, Jim Coulson, just from having to help you around the barn, to save hiring a man.

Andy—Oh don't be too hard on 'em 'Liza; they are tryin' to do their best for their youngsters you know.

Eliza—Doing their best nothing. You fellows think that a boy or girl isn't any good if you aren't making money out of them. Just the same as you do out of your cows and hogs. Even your wives are mere slaves. Helpmates, forsooth! Well I thank my stars I'm not your wife anyhow.

Jim C.—So do I, 'Liza, so do I!

Andy—You betcha, 'Liza, you betcha!

Eliza—That's alright, too. And you can promise yourselves that if I helped to make four thousand dollars I swear I'd help to spend it too, and not in gold mines either. I'd get a few comforts for myself around home.

Andy—(angrily) Well 'Liza, I never knowed an old maid yet who didn't know more about bringin' up a family than anyone else. Can't these fellers do as they like with their money. It's their own business, 'Liza, these fellers has brains—

Eliza—Now don't you get sassy, Andy Bonthead, you have no room for sass; your conduct to your old father is nothing to be proud of, I want to tell you. And if you have any brains they are about as much credit to you as a hole is to a bag. You've gone thro about all your old father scraped and saved for his lifetime and haven't much to show for it either—not even good sense and good brains, such as a good schooling might give you. Here's our minister trying his best to raise a little money to make things

happier in the country for you people and keep your young people from going to the city so they can help you on the farm, but you fellows say you can't afford it, you haven't any money for these things.

Mark F.—Neither we can, 'Liza. I tell you them blame buildings cost too much money, and I for one——

Eliza—You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mark Farmer. If your old father had said that about the school you went to and the church where you were brought up, you wouldn't have had the bit of sense you claim to have right now, and you and your children would have been going around like miserable tramps, without a shirt to your backs. But your old father and mother gave a \$100 for that school and two hundred dollars for that church, because they wanted their children brought up in a Christian atmosphere, and they worked a sight harder for it than you ever did. They wanted to be in a community where they could have all the pleasure they wanted without getting into sin. But all you fellows think about is saving money, and if your children aren't working hard and making money for you, you think they're fools. You don't think they ought to have any pleasure at all. I wonder that your old fathers and mothers don't turn over in their graves to think that they raised such —— sons.

Andy—Now look a-here, 'Liza Catnup! I won't take no more of your chin, d'ye see? Your old Dad never done nothin' to blow about, even if he was a deacon in the church; and I don't see that we have to take all this free advice from you. If your old Dad hadn't give so much to the church, mabbe he'd a had a few dollars to leave to you some day instead o' livin' on your earnin's.

Eliza—My father is living on my earnings because I lived on his for a good long time, as you did on your poor old father. But father spent his money on things that count most for his children. He gave us all a good education and worked hard to put us thro. Today my two brothers own their own farms in the West, my one sister is married to a farmer who knows how to work hard and keep his mouth shut. I'm the only one at home it's true, and I'm taking care of my aged father as long as he lives. Why shouldn't I? He sent me to college where I got an appreciation for something larger than simply making money. I am trying to do my best for my honored father and I thank the Lord every day that he hasn't a cent to show for his lifetime of hard work.

All—Ye do eh?

Andy—Gosh 'Liza, you make me swearin' mad.

Jim C.—Well you're welcome to your wish 'Liza, but not for mine.

Mark F.—Nice kind of talk that is for a Christian, I swan.

Andy—Say 'Liza, any woman as talks that way hain't fit to belong to the church as you do, an' lead the singin'—

Eliza—How do you know I lead the singing, Andy Bonehead. You never come to church to see. I'll just tell you some thing else, while I'm at it. I've been playing the organ there for seven years and I've never seen one of you fellows in church in that time. If my father hasn't any money to show for his life time of hard work, he has something else that's more valuable; he has a clear conscience anyway, and he has a family that loves him and will never see him want; and my poor mother, who is dead and gone, told me herself many times that father never denied her anything she needed at home. We always went to church and to Sunday school and we always had plenty of good books to read and plenty of warm clothes to wear, and things to work with, and father was a Christian man who paid 100 cents on the dollar every time, even to his church. I wouldn't be heard wishing my father had more money and less of the joys of life than he has. He doesn't have to worry about his money and he takes his greatest pleasure in his children and grandchildren and——(stops suddenly and looks down street) Why look, who's that coming? (Enter Mrs. Farmer, Mrs. Coulson and Mrs. Bonehead weeping and moaning, dressed in every day clothes, sunbonnets, etc.)

Mark F.—(looking surprised) Why that's my wife. (calls) What's the matter, wife.

Jim C.—(going towards them looking troubled) What's happened Mary, anything wrong at home? (Both women continue sobbing.)

Andy—Why thar's my wife too. How'd you get here, Mirandy?

Mrs. B.—(snappy) Came by airyplane likely. It beats me how you men have so much time to spend bumming around town, while we women-folks have to slave away at home and get nothing out of it but humble pie and disgrace on account of our husbands doings. I've just been down to cancel our sale bills Andrew and I've notified Mr. Grayson that we won't sell the farm, for I won't sign off.

Andy—Why what's happened, Mirandy. Humble pie—disgrace—

Mrs. B.—Happened? Why everything's happened. Do you suppose Mrs. Coulson and Mrs. Farmer are crying their eyes out for your amusement? You men don't deserve the love of a good woman.

Jim—Well for goodness sake tell us what's the matter. We can't—

Mrs. B.—That's right, Jim Coulson, you can't. No you can't do anything now, that's right. The money's gone now.

Eliza—Gone, Mrs. Bonehead! Mercy me, surely not!

Coulson and Farmer—What money's gone?

Mrs. B.—Yes, it's gone—the money you fellows put in that old gold mine out West.

Mark F.—Why what's happened to it?

Mrs. B.—Why, didn't you hear? It's a wonder you didn't know that, you always know so much about other things. It's a wonder you didn't know when you gave that fellow Hartley four thousand dollars that he was going to skip out and take it with him.

Jim C.—Aw, go on! I don't believe it. It's all old women talk!

Mrs. B.—Old woman's talk eh? Well I'll tell you Jim Coulson you're going to get more talk, more real talk, from the women folks right now, and you're going to listen to it too——

Mrs. C.—(breaking in—wiping her eyes as talks) Yes, that's right, Mrs. B. Here we have been scraping and saving for over 20 years to get that money. The girls wanted a piano and Harry wanted an auto or a horse and buggy, but no, "we can't afford them." He said the girls could go out and earn their money if they wanted it, and Harry had to go to town to earn enough money to dress himself like other boys, and now here's his father gone and wasted every cent of it over some fool who told a nice story.

Mrs. Farmer—Yes and I begged Mark not to listen to that man Hartley. I told him we needed other things worse than we did that gold mine. I've been waiting for years to get our house fixed over and get a new carpet for our parlor so it would be a little more comfortable, but no! My husband there never could afford it. (pointing at him.) Now it's all gone to the winds, and I'm going right down and put a mortgage on the farm and get what I want. And I swear I'll never milk another cow, nor bake another loaf of bread, nor churn another pound of butter for Mark Farmer if he doesn't put half the value of that farm in my own name, so there.

Eliza—Amen, sister! I wouldn't either for any man.

Andy—Are you sure that chap has left town? Who told you he was gone? He was here the day before yesterday.

Mrs. B.—He was seen leaving last night on the midnight train. He didn't buy any ticket because we would all know where he went to.

Jim C.—Well I'll be fly-kicked! And that's the way our preacher uses us eh! Keeps a blaggard under his own roof to swindle the people of his congregation; likely as not he got a good haul out

of it hisself.

Mark F.—That's about all them fellers is good fer anyway--swindlin' the people out of somethin' or 'nother.

Mrs. B.—You needn't blame the preacher for your own fool-hardiness. No likely he knows anything about it hisself.

Mark F.—Knows nothin' about it er? Well we'll see about that. I'll go right now and get the hull bunch of fellers together and if we find out where that chap is we'll lynch him and if the preacher don't tell us where he is we'll lynch him too. Come on Jim and Andy, and we'll hunt the other fellows up. (Walks off stage.)

CURTAIN

ACT IV—SCENE I.

Scene—Minister's home as in Act II. Mr. and Mrs. Whyte and Biddy. Early morning. Minister moving about study.

Minister—What a glorious harvest morning! (looks out window.) Really these beautiful bright days with their swaying fields of grain, and the wonderful star-lit heavens at night, are the things to marvel at. They are the things that make one wonder why an All-wise Providence has been so kind to man. It is certainly not because man has been in any way deserving of His b unties. Think of all the eternal machinery that operates for his benefit and so far as we know, for his alone. The earth, the moon, the stars and all the other planets are kept within their own particular circle, so as to work no ill to man. For him the sun never ceases to shine, nor is the dew or the rain withheld. I wonder that the thoughts of men do not carry them back to these facts that are so patent even to a child. If men would put more reverent thought in their work how much more easily they might put themselves into direct touch with the Divine. The Creator is next door neighbor to every man, woman and child in the Kingdom; His voice is silently speaking to men from the blade of green grass at his door-step, to the stalwart trees of the forest, and the black coal of the mines. He speaks thro the green grass of His present existence and power, thro the trees of his power of the centuries and through the mines of his age long adn eternal career. Every workman, of whatever character, makes his bread and butter thro the product of a Divine Hand. (Sits down.) And yet how comparatively few people really know that provident Father of All, even tho he lives and moves and operates before our very eyes, nearer than our nearest neighbor— (Enter Mrs. Whyte.)

~~do not, but I see now that you can't trust anybody, not even~~
Mrs. W.—(surprised) Now what's this you're saying about your neighbors? You had better be careful what you say, there might be a little bird somewhere about to give away your secret.

Minister—Yes that's a fact. My tell-tale little bird is usually somewhere near at hand. But I'm not afraid of what she has to give away this time. I was only remarking to myself what a wonderful morning this was.

Mrs. Whyte—Oh yes, and perhaps it will improve with a little breakfast. It's a sure sign a man needs something in his stomach when he gets dreamy like that. Come away, honey, by the way isn't Jim down yet?

Minister—I haven't seen him. Hasn't he made his appearance in the dining room yet? (Enter Biddy.) Biddy, hasn't Jim shown up yet?

Biddy—Not that I saw, Mr. Whyte.

Minister—He must be taking things seriously this morning. Well, we'll wait a few minutes for him. (Mrs. Whyte sits down.) Wasn't he all right last night, Biddy.

Biddy—(embarrassed) Why-er-yes, I think he was anyway.

Mr. Whyte—Where did you leave him, Biddy? In the parlor?

Biddy—Why, sure and I had er quite a hard time to lave him at all, Mr. Whyte.

Minister—I suppose he was paying you close attention, eh Biddy?

Biddy—Why-er-yes, with special emphasis upon the "close." At least we weren't quite a thousand miles apart last night.

Mrs. Whyte—There, just as I thought. I'll venture to guess that he's fallen in love with our cook and going to steal her away from us. Why Biddy I didn't think that of you. Just look at that beautiful diamond ring. (Holds up B's. hand.) why Biddy you always told me that men were your greatest enemies.

Biddy—Well-er-of course-that's thrue, but faith and I heard what Mr. Whyte read from the Bible last Sunday, and that I needed to decide.

Minister—What was that Biddy, I don't remember?

Biddy—Why you read in the Bible to "Love your enemies" and you said we ought to do it, even tho it was the hardest thing in the world to do, so you see Mr. Whyte, you're to blame.

Mrs. W.—And did you find it hard to do my dear.

Biddy—(waving her hands and sitting down) Not in the laist. It was all done before I realized it.

Minister—Well I'm afraid the shock was too great for him, Biddy, for he hasn't come down to breakfast yet.

Mrs. Whyte—Well there we are again hubby. Just our luck. Your friend has stolen your maid-servant in gratitude for your friendship. Well Biddy, I congratulate you on your choice. I know you'll be happy dear for Jim is a splendid fellow. Now hubby I think you had better rouse him from his romantic slumbers and tell him it is breakfast time, if he is able to eat.

Minister—Well I'll do my best. (Goes and knocks behind screen and calls.) Jim—Jim—Jim— (No answer.)

Mrs. W.—Open the door and go in. Likely he's feasting among the fairies. Too bad when a man gets it as bad as that.

Minister—Why, wife, he isn't here at all! The bed hasn't even been disturbed.

Biddy—(shocked) Not there at all Mr. Whyte, why whatever has happened to him.

Mrs. W.—Took his departure in a chariot like Elijah. I suppose he's gone clean to heaven in his rapture. Take another look 'round, Tom, to make sure.

Minister—Well I've looked in the bed, and under the bed, and over the bed and can't see any trace of him. (Mrs. W. and Biddy stand facing each other.)

Mrs. W.—(disturbed) Why what in the world has happened? Did he say anything about going away Biddy?

Biddy—(looking consternated and beginning to cry) No, not to me.

Mrs. Whyte—Well don't cry, my dear, nothing serious has happened to him or we would have found trace of it. Besides his clothes are still there aren't they, Tom?

Minister—Yes, his best suit is there, so evidently he doesn't intend to stay away. But his club bag and suit case are both gone. (Knock at door.) What's that, pray? (Mrs. W. looks out window.)

Mrs. W.—Why, Tom, there's a whole mob of men and women out there. Whatever are they after?

(Mr. Whyte opens front door. Calls from outside.) Where's your friend Hartley. We want Hartley. He's a thief—swindler—rogue. (Entre Harry Coulson.)

Minister—Why what's the matter, Harry. What's all the row about outside.

Harry—Matter! Why preacher you talk as though you didn't know anything about what the matter is.

Minister—Well it's just as you find me, Harry. If I can do anything to help you I will be glad to do it, but you must first tell me your trouble.

Harry—Well it ain't going to be very pleasant for you Mr. Preacher, I can assure you. I think you'd better pack your little grip

and get out of town fer I can assure you the fellers don't feel none too good about it.

Minister—About what, pray? I haven't murdered anyone have I? I haven't stolen any money from you have I or——

Harry—You didn't, eh! Well you might as well do the thing yourself as keep the chap around who did.

Minister—Now look here, Harry, I'm not going to be insulted in my own house by you or anyone else, and if you don't explain yourself in three minutes I'll give you some of my physical christianity and you'll land outside that door quicker than lightening. Now get busy.

Harry—(squirring round about apologetically and looking scared) Oh well don't get excited preacher, I didn't mean anything; but that chap Hartley has skinned out with all our money and a whole lot more besides.

Mr. W., Mrs. W., and Biddy—Money? Whose money?

Minister—How did he get your money? Didn't he give you value for it? He was selling books wasn't he?

Harry—Books? I never heard him say anything about books. He soaked us over some bloomin' gold mine or other down in Nevada.

Mrs. W. and Biddy—(together) A gold mine?

Biddy—Sure it's all bosh, Mr. Whyte. This chap has bugs in his head. He niver mentioned gold mind to us, did he?

Harry—(noticing Biddy and staring at her) He didn't eh? Not likely he would when he was gettin' his board fer nuthin' at the preacher's house, (aside, and with a girl like that around.

Minister—And is that why the crowd is gathered out there? I will invite them to come in. Who are they Harry?

Harry—(stammering and glancing at Biddy) Why-er-ah-um-my Dad's out there, madder'n a hatter 'bout it, but then-well-ah-oh I guess it'll be alright, preacher. (Edging over to Biddy.)

Minister—(going to the door) Gentlemen come inside. I want to hear all about this affair. (Enter Mark Farmer, John Farmer, Jim Coulson, Andrew Bonehead, Billy Bonehead, Mrs. Farmer and Mrs. Coulson.)

Minister—Come in Ladies and be seated. (The men make a scramble for the chairs leaving the women standing. Billy Bonehead and Harry Coulson both make for the seat beside Biddy. Harry gets it. Biddy moves over. Harry tries to follow.)

Minister—Now, Gentlemen, what's all this trouble about?

Billy Bonehead—Now, Dad, there's your chance. Give it to him.

Andy B.—Well sir, we jest come round to find out what's happened to that fellar Hartley, what's been a livin' wid you? You likely

know that he's a sharker and got a lot of money out of us fellers to invest in a gold mine out in Nevada.

Minister—I knew nothing of the kind. How much did he get?

Andy B.—He got about \$20,000 out of us altogether and it was all our hard earnin's for a good many years.

Jim C.—(sorrowfully) Yes and here's our wives here, jest when they was plannin' to get a few comforts fer themselves, here some sneak of a swindler comes along an' beats us out of it. I'm surprised Mr. Whyte that you keep such a feller round you. You might have known he wasn't straight and——

Biddy—(jumping up) Look here, mister, you just be careful what you say about our friend Mr. Hartley. Faith and I never saw such ignorance in all me life. I wonder who you are that you come into a gentleman's house and insult him to his face. It's a mane beast ye are, I can see that, or you'd get up off your haunches and give your wife here a seat. Faith and a lot you care about her comforts. (Sits down some distance from Harry.)

Minister—If you are so sure about the way I ought to have known him, Mr. Coulson, why didn't you detect him yourself and keep your money in the bank?

Jim Coulson—Wal, I supposed as he was a friend o' yourn he'd be

Minister—No, sir, not even yourself, that's right. Well, men, I'm sorry if any friend of mine has done you any wrong. I'm more sorry for your wives and children than for you. I know something of what it has meant for them. But I have yet to be convinced that Hartley is the rogue you say he is. I have known him for many years and I know that if he ever wanted to get rich by false means he has had a thousand chances to do so. But he never would take advantage of any man that way, and I feel certain he is not going to deceive you. He has been honest almost to a fault. But I must point out to you men that this is nothing more than you ought to expect. As far as I can find out you men never had a dollar to give to any good cause. You couldn't afford to give money for the church—the institution that upholds honesty and truthfulness in all things. Our church work in this section has been held up because you men wouldn't support it, you said you couldn't afford such things. Now when you find yourselves victimized by some dishonest schemer, as you say, you fly to me and try to lay the blame on me for your losing from \$4,000 to \$5,000 each. It doesn't seem to strike you that you are just the victims of the very thing of your own support and your own sympathy. All these years——

Jim C.—(breaking in) What! Do you mean to say we encouraged

* decent, but I see now that you can't trust anybody, not even ——

thievery and fraud round here, preacher? I'll have you arrested, Mister, fer——

Minister—Be cool, Coulsen, and let me finish what I have to say. If you haven't encouraged fraud and dishonesty in this section, you certainly haven't done anything to discourage it very much. You let other people do that by letting them pay your share of work of the church. You have discouraged righteousness and held up the good work of God so now if you are the victims of fraud and deceit you have no one to blame but yourselves. You cannot rob God and get away with it I tell you.

Coulson—I'm goin' home. Come on' wife. Who's goin' ter listen to such bosh as that, and from a minister, too.

Harry—Never mind the money, Dad. We don't care very much about it anyway. (Moves over nearer to Biddy. Tries to attract her attention.)

Jim Coulson—We don't eh? Well at supper time you was talkin' about gettin' a automobyle, but now that feller's gone and he's got your money.

Harry—Huh, that's alright, Dad. But I've changed my mind, by heck. I hope he never comes back. (Moves a little closer to Biddy.)

Billy Bonehead—Well I know what we'll do with him if he ever does come back. He'll never get out of this town alive if I have anything to do with it.

Harry—Oh don't get excited Billy. He won't show up again don't you never think.

Jim C.—Well, preacher, if you know where he is it's the least you might do to tell us, so we could send a detective after him.

Minister—Send a detective nothing. He hasn't been gone 24 hours yet and you might give him a chance to come back of his own accord. I don't believe myself that there is anything wrong, and that he'll come back and make good, if you'll keep your heads. The fact of the matter is we do not know anything about him, and we never knew he was gone until half an hour ago.

Andy Bonehead—Wall, we know our money's gone anyway, so we may as well go on about our business. We ain't goin' to get anywhere by stayin' here that's sure, and I kin only say Mr. Whyte that you're a durn funny preacher—the funniest I ever did see.

Minister—Likely as not, Mr. Bonehead, but from what I know you haven't seen very many in your life-time. And may I add that I think you're just as funny a farmer. Perhaps your loss of money will add something to your good sense so that it may not be wholly a loss after all.

Harry C.—(jumping up) Well good-bye Mr. Whyte. (Holds out his

hand.) Pleased to have made your acquaintance. (softly) Don't pay too much attention to Dad. He's not much of a sport like me. He never played football or hockey in his life, so he don't know how to lose very well, you know. But gee whiz I don't care a hang about that money, we never had any use for it anyway and Hartley might as well have it as anyone else. It was no good to us. (Keeping eye on Biddy.) So I don't give a continental if he never comes back. Good-bye.

CURTAIN

Announce interval of a month.

ACT IV—SCENE II.

Minister's home as before. One month later. Minister in study looking troubled. Reading morning mail.

Minister—I wonder what this day brings us. Seems to me every day for the last month has brought a fresh relay of trouble and disagreeable rancour. I must confess I find it hard to keep sweet these days with all the trouble and distress going around. There's Harper's little son almost drowned in the mill pond for want of a better bathing place, and now young Hopkins wife is to be buried tomorrow through positive neglect and the need of better nursing, and Ned is talking sentimental about it being the Lord's will and the strange ways of Providence and all that kind of stuff, when it was nothing else than plain, downright carelessness on his own part. (Hits table in front of him in emphasis.) He wouldn't have a specialist or a trained nurse, because it cost too much. Law me I'm glad that men like that are few and far between. If I witness many more cases like these I'd be crazy. Then there's Harry's case. No word from him since he left. I'm afraid my friend has proved a traitor despite what Biddy says. I wish I could believe he is as true as she thinks he is. But I'm afraid—(Enter Biddy)

Biddy—Any mail this evening, Mr. Whyte?

Minister—None for you Biddy sorry to say. (Biddy sits down.)

Biddy—(sadly) I guess Mr. Whyte I'll pack my things tonight if you don't mind.

Minister—Pack you things? Why, pray?

Biddy—I think I'd better go along as I did before and try and make my own living.

Minister—But you are welcome to your living now Biddy. I wish I were wealthy so I could make it better for you.

Biddy—Oh that's not the trouble. It's too good for a girl like me. I think I'll go and do something humbler—as a house-maid, until I can earn enough to take me back to Ireland.*

Minister—Getting homesick, Biddy?

Biddy—(dreamily) No, not exactly. But I don't know—I-I'm just lonely, Mr. Whyte.

Minister—And we are lonely for your sake, Biddy. This thing has been a terrible strain on us. We are very much disappointed in Hartley and we feel that we are in a certain sense to blame for your predicament.

Biddy—But I am not disappointed, Mr. Whyte. I'm confident Mr. Jim will come back and explain everything. Why did he leave his clothes behind?

Minister—I wish I could share your confidence, Biddy, but then we won't talk about it now. Don't pack your things anyway, at least not tonight, until I can find something more worthy of you. I think I can get you a good position. It's getting dark now you see and—(Enter Mrs. Whyte.)

Mrs. Whyte—Mercy, goodness, Tom, what's all the noise coming down street. They are shouting like mad men. Looks out of window.) Why here's a whole mob of people coming down the street with a man on their shoulders. Why who is it? What are they going to do with him? (Shouts from behind.) Bring a rope. Bring a rope. Here's a tree, string him up. String him up, etc., etc., etc.

Minister—(alarmed) Why, that's Jim Hartley. (Drops book and grabs hat.) They'll murder him. (Runs out.) Hold on there men, what are you going to do?

Shouts—Aw, we got him, preacher. Throw that noose around his neck. Hang the thief. He ought to be hung. Etc., Etc.

Biddy—(rushes out into crowd with horse-whip in hand brandishing it and laying it over the shoulders of men. After a desperate battle she and the minister drive them back and release Hartley.)

Biddy—There ye fiends, take that will ye. Ye blessed hypocrites. Sure I'll cut ye to the marrow if ye dare come near. I niver saw such a bunch of hood-lums.

Shouts from outside—Get him. Lynch him. Take the whole lot, etc.

Minister—Now Gentlemen, I'm going to see that Hartley gets British fair play—that's what you want when you're in trouble. If he is guilty of what you accuse him I will hand him over to the police for justice and punishment by law. But I will allow no man to molest him, unless he does it by force and he will have to kill me first if he does that. You have no right to take the law

* At this point, Biddy sits down at piano and sings and plays some old Irish melody e. g. "I left dear old Ireland because I was poor".

in your own hands this way. (They all follow him to the door, some go inside.)

Minister—Now Gentlemen, I'll give Mr. Hartley the floor to explain himself.

Hartley—Well for the life of me I don't know what I have to explain Gentlemen, or can I think what is the matter.

Andy Bonehead—(standing in front of him and looking fiercely at him) Aw, ye're mighty innercent ain't ye, ye two-faced son of Beelzebub—where's that money—(Biddy jumps from her place and hits him.)

Biddy—Sit down there you murderin' lookin' baste, sit down and be dacent and give the gentleman time to spake can't ye.

Coulson—(looking frightened) Well sir, we want to know what ye did *

Mark Farmer—Yes, and where's that \$4,000 ye cheated me and me family out of, ye hypocrit.

Minister—I positively will not allow any man to insult Hartley in this way before he is proven guilty. do you hear. Now not another word out of any of you and I'll take charge of him. Hartley these men are concerned about the money you got them to put into that scheme of yours. Can you explain it for them.

Hartley—Why sure, I can give an account of every cent of it. It's all in the bank here just as they gave it to me and I'm ready still to guarantee them what I told them I would, if they'll do the right thing. I haven't spent one cent of your money. I may tell you Gentlemen, that I don't need your money to get along in this world, I have plenty of my own that I got by hard work and saving. I heard about what your minister was trying to put across for your community and your young people and to make things a little easier for your wives and sisters and I found out too that this whole scheme was held up because you fellows wouldn't put your money into it. You said you couldn't afford it. But you would rather let your boys and girls go to the town and to the city to work for somebody else and get into all kinds of bad company and run the streets with all kinds of evil-minded men and women than do something to keep them around you at home where you know where they are. They go to the cities and earn a little and spend more than they make at picture shows and dance halls and candy and other foolish ways. They go because they haven't any recreation or amusement at home except what they make themselves and at their own expense. Then you men rail about the city taking your help away from the farm. But now when you get a chance to do something to make country life attractive and pleasant for everybody, you wouldn't do it because it cost too

** with that money you get from us fellows to put into that gold mine out west..!*

much money. But when some shark comes along with a gold brick scheme that promises you impossible things, you roll your money into it like flies crowd around a poison-plate. Some of you fellows would deserve to get bitten good and hard if it wasn't for your wives and children—they would suffer the most over it.

Andy Bonehead—Aw that's alright for you to talk soft that way, you pale-faced— (Biddy bounds forward and shakes her fist at his nose.)

Biddy—Don't ye dare say another word or call the gentleman another name or I'll scratch yer old black eyes out d'ye hear?

Coulson—Well at any rate you promised us 30 per cent. the first year, 60 per cent. the third or fourth year, now how do you account for that?

Hartley—I did and I stand by my statement and if you don't believe me read..... where the Bible says that if we give up anything in this life for the Lord's sake we shall receive an hundred fold more in this life. Do you believe the Bible? Now I just want to say that every dollar you gave me is in the bank and I'll just hand it over to Mr. Whyte here and if any man wants his money back he can have it on one condition that is that he makes the cheque out in his wife's name, to have it for herself and to spend it as she likes. But I hope that you will leave at least half of it for Mr. Whyte to build that new community building and have those new recreation grounds and the swimming pool and picture shows he is trying to put over and that your young people need. But remember the cheque is to be made out in your wife's name. They are to spend it as they need it at home or anywhere else, see?

John Farmer and Angelina Beaver—(Jumping up and shouting) Hurrah! We're going to get it at last. Hurrah! Hurrah!

John Farmer—Say Mr. Hartley, you're a gentleman. I lied to my Dad the other day to help Angelina out when she was collecting for this business and I made up my mind that if Dad didn't help out in this swimming pool business, I'd slide out his best hog next week and sell it and give the money. But now it's all jolly Mr. Preacher. Mother'll give me the money, won't you mother? Isn't that jolly, Angelina?

Harry Coulson—Gee whiz, and I see where we get a car and the girls can have a new piano in next week. Ha! Ha! And you bet I'll get some new togs, too. Mother'll give us the cash I bet. Say Gov'nor, I don't care if you soke Dad for a few more thousands if you let us in on it that way. Gee whiz, but if it don't look like Christmas every day to me. Good-bye preacher, I'll go tell the

girls. I'll trust you to settle with dad. Good-bye. (exit Harry.)
Hartley—Gentlemen, here are the legal forms, you can settle this matter right here by signing over this money to your wives. Are you ready to do it? Here is the cheque for the whole amount Mr. Whyte, and the bank book. Now Gentlemen, who will be first? (All sit still for a few minutes making wry faces.) Who'll be first Gentlemen?

Mark Farmer—Wal, seein' as we has to do it, I suppose we might just as well do it fust as las'. (Signs his name.)

Andy Bonehead—(beginning to cry) Boo-oo-oo, etc. I'm ruined. I'm robbed in broad daylight. Boo-oo-oo (staggers to table) Mirandy never knowed how to spend money 'ceptin' on frills and silly dresses—boo-oo-oo. (Signs and goes back wiping face on red handkerchief) It's all a bloomin' hold-up, preacher.

Jim Coulson—Wal, we might as well be swindled one way as another, I suppose. If my family goes to the devil I'll know who'll be to blame. (signs) There now ye can do—

Hartley—I'm sure your wives ^{must} be proud of you ~~if they were here~~. You surely are a credit to the women-folk. (Exit the crowd except Angelina and John Farmer.)

Angelina—Now all you parsonage folks come out for a little drive. Our car is at the door and there is time to go out to the lake and have a swim before night. Come along.

Mr. and Mrs. Whyte—Oh thanks Angelina, we will accept with pleasure.

Minister—Here's our bathing suits right here in the hall. Hurrah everybody. (They all depart except Mr. Hartley and Biddy, who lag behind until the rest are gone. Then Biddy rushes up and puts her arms about his neck.)

Biddy—Oh Mr. Jim, I knew you would come back, I was sure of it and I'm so happy, so happy. But where have you been this whole long month, that I've been praying for you night and day.

Jim—I knew it all the time, my dear, and my heart ached for you. But I had planned for it all just to show these people how easily they can be "duped" by the promise of big and impossible interest. And I wanted to help Mr. Whyte with his plans, you know in that way I could. I couldn't even write to you dear, for fear you might becomed involved in the scheme and be made a party to what looked like fraud. But I knew you'd be true, Biddy, even though everyone else failed me, and that was th only happiness I had. I was only back at Dayton all the time. I have bought a beautiful little bungalow there for you and me. So your career as a book agent, and mine as a dealer in gold bricks is over, I

hope.

Biddy—Oh, Mr. Jim, I'm so happy and I'll love you all the rest of your life.

Jim—And I'm the happiest man in all the world with my little Irish Maid.

CURTAIN

THE END

The effectiveness of this latter part will be heightened greatly by the ladies urging thir husbands to come up to the table and sign the document.—Ed.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Open Field. Discussion between Mark Farmer and son, John. Hoeing. Angelina's visit.

ACT II

Scene 1—Minister's home. Good natured banter between Minister and Wife. Scene 2—The same, Next day—Coming of Biddy McPhail and Jim Hartley. Scene 3—The same. Next day—Parley between Rev. Thos. White, Jim Hartley and Biddy. Hartley plots to help Minister. Scene 4—Scene without words.

ACT III

Scene 1—A Village Street. Conversation between three farmers, Hartley works his deceptive plan. Scene 2—Several months later. Same three farmers. Eliza Catnup gives advice. Exposure of Hartley's plot by the farmers' wives.

ACT IV

Scene 1—Minister's home as in Act 2. Discovery of Hartley's absence. Scene 2—The same, one month later, Hartley's return and escape.

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